



Strengthening Ottawa's Social Fabric



Nick Harrison, Director of Partnerships | nick@synapcity.ca | June 2021

Synapcity is Ottawa's community broker – an organization focused on *civic education, facilitation training* and *local democracy*.

We energize and activate both *people* and *institutions* to work together as *CityMakers*.

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What they say about us

“ Synapcity came into our city and transformed it. They have changed how we can inform our communities, how we can be a positive change and how we can exchange the knowledge and involve our community members in urban and rural areas.

– Mathieu Fleury, Ottawa City Councillor

“ Before Synapcity, I'd never imagined reaching out to a politician. Throughout Boot Camp, we realized 'wow, we can speak to these people' – and more than that, Synapcity gave us the tools to use when we do speak to them.

– Civics Boot Camp alumni
Caroline W.

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Our Impact on Ottawa

Synapcity impacts CityMakers
in different ways:



Higher Levels of Community Engagement

75% of respondents feel more confident, motivated and empowered after our events.

Stronger Local Connections

75% of attendees report meeting someone helpful to their cause thanks to us.

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Our Impact on Ottawa

Synapcity impacts CityMakers
in different ways:

Inspired Future Leaders

66% plan to start a new initiative;
50% plan to take on a leadership role in an existing organization;
20% intend to run for political office.

More Open Mindsets

More than half said they were more likely to re-think their own views;
66% reported being exposed to new perspectives.



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Synapcity Case Study: *Learn*



Civics Boot Camp (formerly Citizen's Academy)

Description: Our marquee program takes a diverse batch of curious citizens through real-life problems in Ottawa, empowering them to create change in their communities.

The Impact: Over 10 Boot Camps completed, with over 400 CityMaker alumni; these CityMakers have gone on to launch local initiatives, run for municipal offices, community associations and BIAs, and more.

Our Contribution: Synapcity plays the host at Boot Camp - creating the space, inviting the participants and facilitating generative dialogue that leads to radical change.

Synapcity improves civic literacy and engagement.

To learn more: [Testimonial from a Boot Camp Alumni](#)

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Synapcity Case Study: **Connect**



Ecology Ottawa, Just Food Ottawa, BeetBox Farm

Description: Ottawa has one of the most vibrant urban agriculture ecosystems in the world, and Synapcity has played a key role in networking and growing relationships.

The Impact: Over 1,000,000 trees planted; the Emergency Climate Declaration of 2019; the launch of the Just Food Farm on NCC property; the creation of a [mapping tool and guide](#) for finding local produce in Ottawa.

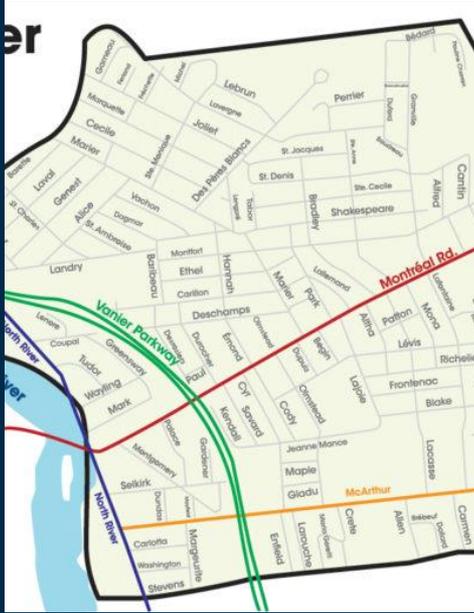
Our Contribution: All 3 organizations have either been founded by or are led by Boot Camp alumni; many collaborative events and shared projects between the groups have been facilitated by Synapcity.

Synapcity brokers relationships between citizens.

To learn more: [Ecology Ottawa](#), [Just Food Ottawa](#), [BeetBox](#)



Synapcity Case Study: Act



Placemaking & Community Building in Vanier

Description: Working alongside community and cultural associations, BIAs, grassroots organizers and interested citizens, Synapcity has facilitated the collaborative growth of one of Ottawa's most diverse neighbourhoods.

The Impact: Multiple local citizen initiatives launched; improvement on a number of [neighbourhood equity metrics](#); development of community plans for key Vanier properties.

Our Contribution: Multiple Boot Camp projects focused on Vanier; hosting a number of placemaking events with local organizers and politicians like councillor Mathieu Fleury.

Synapcity contributes to healthy neighbourhoods.

To find out more: [Vanier Community Association](#)

Synapcity Case Study: *Advocate*



Gotta Go! Advocacy Campaign

Description: Gotta Go! advocates for a network of, and signage to, safe, free, clean and environmentally responsible public toilets and water fountains that are accessible to persons of all abilities at major transit stops, key public places and parks to meet the needs of residents and tourists in Canada's Capital City.

The Impact: Multiple successful lobbying campaigns with the City, OC Transpo, the NCC, and Ottawa Tourism; media advocacy across social media, print, and television.

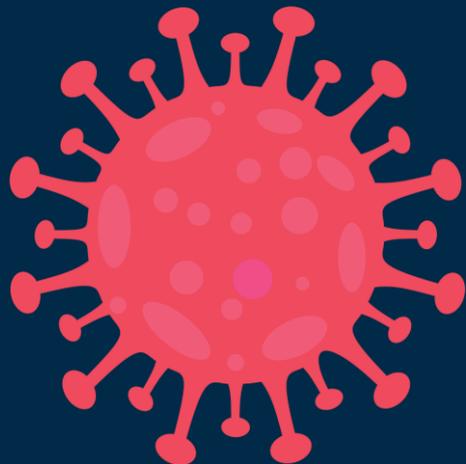
Our Contribution: Launched directly from the Citizen's Academy in the fall of 2013, with ongoing support through multiple events and consultations.

Synapcity inspires and promotes citizen activism.

To find out more: [Gotta Go! Campaign website](#)

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Our Current Situation



COVID 19:

Impact on Ottawa

- Anxious and isolated residents
- Torn community fabric
- Loss of public programs
- Impaired local networks

Impact on Synapcity

- Cutting costs to safeguard minimal reserves
- Adapting to an online environment
- Retooling of facilitation programs



The Challenge

- How do we reimagine our work post-Covid?
- How do we achieve long-term sustainability?

Current & Upcoming Programs

CityTalks Speaker Series

- Featuring voices from Ottawa and around the world discussing crucial issues faced by cities.

Civics Boot Camp

- Our original program for civic literacy, giving citizens real-life Ottawa case studies to take from problem to solution.

Hosting Network

(coming 2021)

- A peer-to-peer education center, developing Ottawa's collective capacity for hosting better conversations.

Synapcity Sessions

(coming 2021)

- **Conversations for the Public Good** - Led by our Hosting Network and community members, with a new dynamic every time.



Looking Ahead at the Possibilities

Synapcity Ward Talks

Town-hall events throughout the city with Synapcity-trained hosts and community partners for genuine political conversations on crucial topics to Ottawans.

Digital Community Hub

A central community events calendar, job & volunteer board and directory of local groups for Ottawa's social sector to **connect, recruit, and grow**.

Community Conversations Fund

A stable resource base for Synapcity CityMakers to assist local organizers with outreach, engage in emergent conversations, and say yes to more opportunities.

CityMaker Microgrants

Identify, accelerate and amplify successful initiatives in Ottawa, providing pass-through funding to Synapcity alumni who are improving their neighbourhoods.



Will you consider joining us as a Synapcity CityMaker?

To make a donation or discuss a partnership opportunity,
please contact Nick Harrison at nick@synapcity.ca,

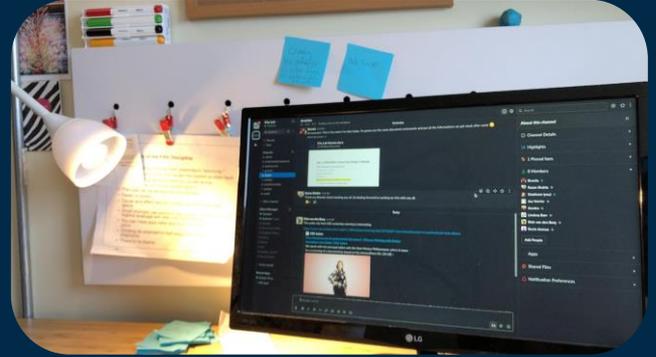
or

[donate directly](#)

via the Social Planning Council of Ottawa by selecting Synapcity.



Appendix



About Us

MISSION

Synapcity energizes and activates people and institutions to work together as CityMakers

GOAL

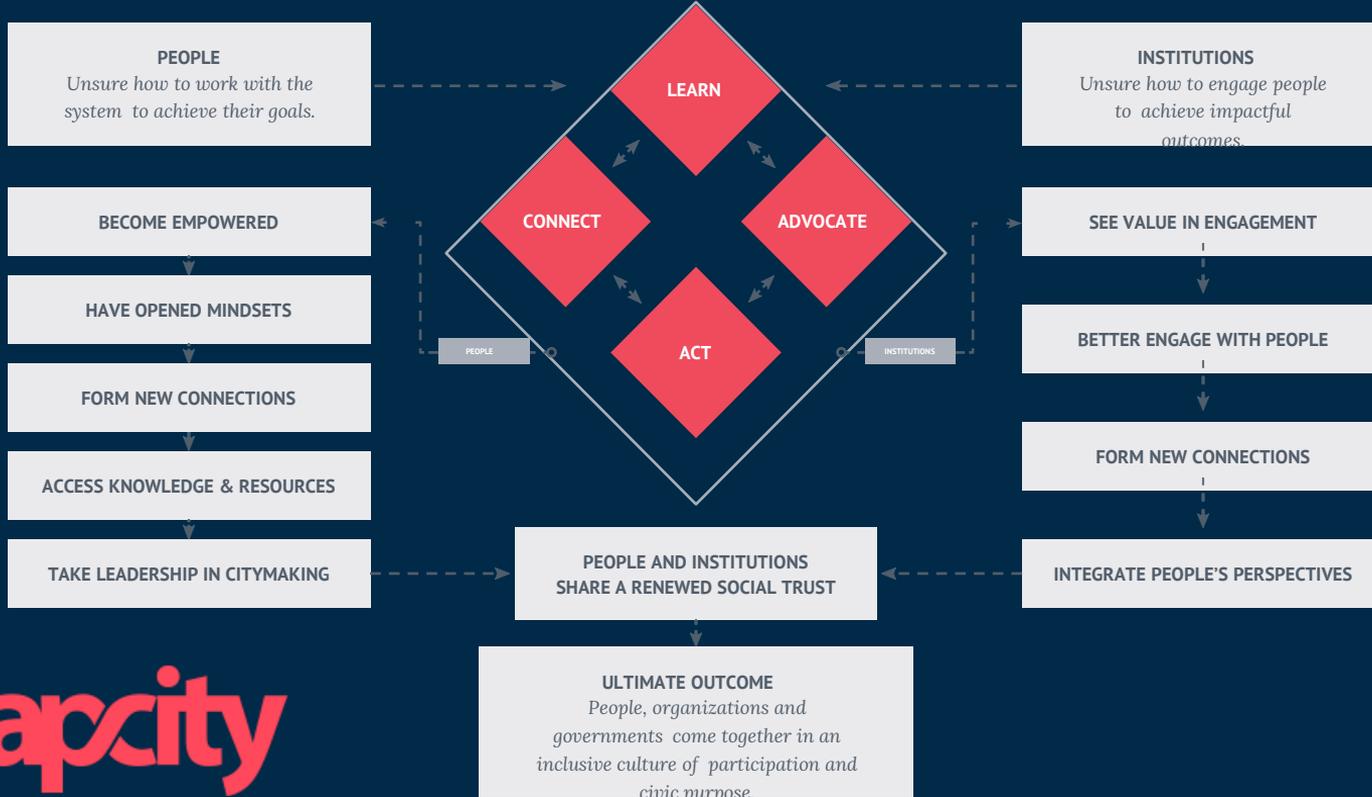
People and institutions share a renewed **social trust**.

ULTIMATE OUTCOME

We as people, organizations and governments come together to create stronger local communities of place and people.



Theory of Change



Drivers of Change

LEARN

- **Civics Boot Camp** - Training citizens to take ideas from problem to solution
- **City Talks** - Monthly public events featuring influential CityMakers on crucial topics

CONNECT

- **Hosting Circle** - Peer-to-peer community building collective capacity
- **Synapcity Sessions** - Intimate events for a wide range of community dialogues

ACT

- **Placemaking** - Meeting the city where they are, launching neighbourhood projects
- **Ward Talks** - Holding accessible spaces for local democracy to thrive

ADVOCATE

- **Newsletter** - Promotion, amplification & acceleration of other Ottawa initiatives
- **EDI Initiatives** - Improving equity outcomes, beginning with our own spaces



Our People



Aaron Burry
Board Chair



Ken Victor
Co-founder &
Board Member



Judy Watling
Board Member



Nicole Hurtubise
Board Member



Judy Maxwell
Co-founder &
Board Member



Nick Harrison
Director of
Partnerships



Laurel Mackenzie
Contributor

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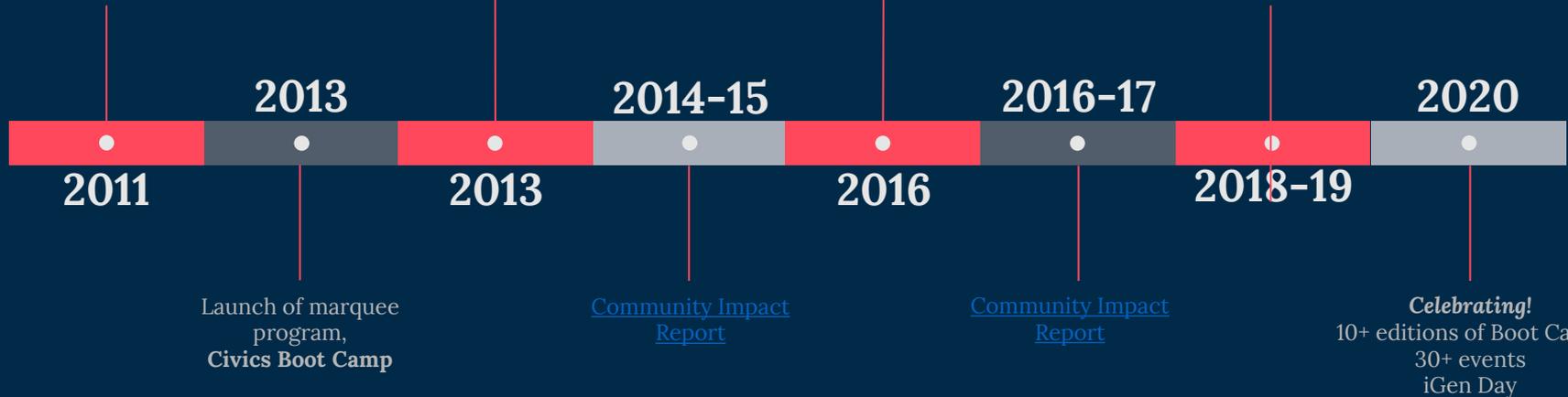
Our Journey

Citizens Academy (Synapcity's forerunner) is founded by [Judy Maxwell](#), [Manjit Basi](#), [Ken Victor](#), [Caroline Andrew](#) & [Maureen Molot](#), based on a [Syracuse NY program](#)

First grants, by Ottawa Community Foundation & Ontario Trillium Foundation

Rebrand as **Synapcity** - "the synapses of the city" for Ottawa

Delivered dozens of events across Ottawa, backed by the OTF Grow grant



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Our Relationship with the SPCO

Social Planning Council of Ottawa

A Catalyst for Sustainable, Social and Economic Development since 1928

- Acts as an incubator and funder of key social programs in the city of Ottawa
- Responsible for the creation of ParaTranspo, Ottawa's United Way, and more important civic institutions

Incubated Entities of the SPCO

- Synapcity
- Youth Ottawa
- Neighbourhood Equity Index
- Hit The Streets
- Hot Shoe Productions
- Ethnocultural Seniors' programs
- Effective Measures services